

Psalm 40:2

The Rescue of the Miners in Chile

On August 5, 2010 in the country of Chile, a mine shaft collapsed blocking the main ramp into the mine. Thirty-one miners were trapped. They quickly found a "workshop" in one of the mine's caverns, while two others **followed an errant white butterfly** to the refuge after the dust cleared.

Water and batteries were in the shelter, and the men survived off canned tuna, a jar of peaches and moxie until a drill bit pierced the stuffy **dungeon's ceiling** August 22. The men attached to a probe a note scrawled in bold, red letters on a ragged piece of paper. "**We are fine in the shelter, the 33 of us,**" it said.

News reporter Elliot McGlaughlin writes, "Rescuers on Friday were getting closer to the shelter the men have called home for more than nine weeks, and they finished the 28-inch-wide hole by Saturday, weeks ahead of schedule. They said it would then take a few days to encase part of the tunnel in steel and make other preparations for lifting out the men.

Using three specially designed capsules -- **each dubbed "Phoenix" after the mythical firebird that rose from the ashes** -- rescuers intend to pull the men out one at a time next week.

By the time they are extracted, they will have been beneath the earth for about 1,700 hours. Much of that time will have been spent in the "Refuge 33" shelter that measures 538 square feet, the size of a cozy studio apartment.

The temperature at times has hovered near 85 degrees, and about 2,300 feet of rock separates them from the surface. That's more than seven football fields deep. The tallest building in the United States, the Willis Tower in Chicago, Illinois, stands 1,450 feet high.”

What an amazing story of survival under such dark and miserable conditions! The record of history shows many times miners trapped in a mine shaft so deep under the ground don't make it out alive. But these 33 men in Chile are mercifully still alive, and I pray the Lord will deliver them out of their dark dungeon, see the light of day once again, be reunited with their families, and believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

A news article had a quote from the Pope on the crisis in Chile, “The Pope prayed for them and said he is entrusting them to St. Lorenzo, one of the men's patron saints.” I am praying for the miners but not through St. Lorenzo because the Bible teaches that there is only one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

My text for this evening is Psalm 40:2, “He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.” The Psalmist describes being in a pit (the word can be translated dungeon). It was a horrible and miserable place to be in.

Adam Clark writes, “A horrible pit literally means the sounding pit; where nothing was heard except the howlings of wild beasts, or the hollow sounds of wind reverberated and broken from the craggy sides and roof.

The miry clay was where the longer you stayed the deeper you sank, and was utterly unable to save yourself. "The pit of perdition, and the mud of corruption."

These are figurative expressions to point out the dreary, dismal, ruinous state of sin and guilt, and the utter inability of a condemned sinner to save himself either from the guilt of his conscience, or the corruption of his heart.

I see in Psalm 40:2 a great comparison between the experience of the Psalmist and the experience of the trapped miners in Chile.

We have here life lessons for us all. Lessons that point us to eternity, and to the great need we have of being delivered from our darkness. Therefore, the title of my message is, *The Rescue of the Miners in Chile: How are we living in view of eternity?* There are three things I would like to consider.

1. Men are trapped under darkness

McGlaughlin writes, “Rescuers on Friday were getting closer to the shelter the men have called home for more than nine weeks, and they finished the 28-inch-wide hole by Saturday, weeks ahead of schedule. They said it would then take a few days to encase part of the tunnel in steel and make other preparations for lifting out the men.

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These miners are trapped and in desperate need of rescue. They need help and very soon or else they will die. It is a race against time.

Similarly, the Bible teaches that all men are trapped under sin, and are in desperate need of salvation. It doesn't matter your race; it doesn't matter your nationality; it doesn't matter your social status. All men are under sin and darkness, and need to be saved.

We read in Romans 5:12-14, “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so **death passed upon all men**, for that all have sinned: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.”

Man went from being **secure** to being **insecure** , because of his rebellion and sin, and so now suffers from various and numerous **perils**, for body and soul, and from **fear**, and the **pit**, and the **snare**.

All men are **trapped by tragedies**, and by **misfortunes**, and by **sinful decisions**. All are **trapped by the times** in which they live, by **unforeseen events**, especially of the **snare of death** itself.

Because of **sin**, man is **alienated** from **God**. We read in Ephesians 4:18, “Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.” Sin has blinded men to their true condition before a holy God.

We read in 2 Corinthians 4:4, “In whom the god of this world hath **blinded** the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”

1 John 2:11, “But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath **blinded** his eyes.”

Men are trapped in darkness. The Miners in Chile are trapped under the earth. Mankind is trapped in sin and death. Maybe you are here today and trapped in darkness. You are a prisoner in darkness and you need to be rescued. Only in Christ can you be set free from the bondage of sin and death.

In Luke 4:18 Christ declares, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.”

Isaiah 42:7, “To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.”

Men are trapped under darkness

2. Not only are men trapped under darkness but men are living in darkness.

Health officials from Chile are concerned regarding the mental states of the miners and observe, “The men seemed happy given their circumstances, but rescuers remained concerned about their mental states. When an official first talked to them, he avoided telling them it would be an estimated four months before they'd be saved.

The men haven't been exposed to the sun on the surface in more than two months, so rescuers want to make sure they don't fall ill or damage their retinas. There are also concerns about their blood pressure and post-traumatic stress disorder.”

The 33 trapped miners in Chile want out of their darkness. They don't want to stay in the mine shaft because they know that living there will kill them.

However, the Bible teaches that sinners don't want to leave their darkness. They want sin. They choose to live in darkness rather than live in the light. They enjoy the pleasures and lifestyles of sin, but don't want to live with the consequences of their sinful actions.

In John 3:19 we read the words of Christ, "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and **men loved darkness** rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

Isaiah 9:2, "**The people that walked in darkness** have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined."

Praise the Lord light dispels darkness. Christ declares in John 12:46, "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness."

If it were not for light, nothing could be seen. Light shows things for what they really are. Light never lies.

If there is a scratch in the paint, light will show it. If there is an imperfection in a diamond, light will manifest it. Light manifests sin for what it is.

A reason why the world rejects Christ is because He, as the Light of the World, shows people that their sin is hopeless, wicked, and unprofitable. The true Light tells the truth about sin.

Men are living in darkness.

3. Men are dying in darkness.

The miners hope in a rescue.

"I want to eat so many things. I'm hungrier than ever. All these days I've been dreaming about my mom cooking for me. That will happen soon. After the bad comes the good," hoped one miner.

All the miners joined in Ariel Ticona's glee when his wife gave birth to a baby girl September 14. He watched it with his brother, Cristian, who was at Camp Esperanza, which means Hope in English. Said Ticona's wife, "We're calling her Hope, first, because we never lost hope. Second, because it's the name of the camp where the families are living. And third, because the 33 miners never lost hope either."

“The whole country will be overjoyed. We will jump and cry with happiness when the Earth returns them to us,” said Juan Inzunza, cook at Camp Esperanza

Those at Camp Esperanza have been a hopeful bunch. Their demeanors brightened at news of the drills' progress. When the 900-pound Phoenix capsules and accompanying winch arrived, they cheered. They're as ready as the miners for a rescue.

But the Scripture teaches that men are dying in darkness and when they awake in hell they discover to their horror that there is no hope, nothing to look forward to, forever separated from the mercy and grace of God.

2 Peter 2:4, “For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of **darkness**, to be reserved unto judgment.”

Three times the phrase **outer darkness** is found in the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew 8:12, “But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into **outer darkness**: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Matthew 22:13, “Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into **outer darkness**, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Matthew 25:30, “And cast ye the unprofitable servant into **outer darkness**: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

A commentary explains *outer darkness* this way, “The expression is emphatic--"the darkness which is outside." To be "outside" at all--or, in the language of Re 22:15, to be "without" the heavenly city, excluded from its joyous nuptials and gladsome festivities--is sad enough of itself, without anything else. But to find themselves not only excluded from the brightness and glory and joy and felicity of the kingdom above, but thrust into a region of "darkness," with all its horrors, this is the dismal retribution here announced, that awaits the unworthy at the great day.”

Men are dying in darkness.

In closing, 33 miners in Chile are waiting in a dark mine shaft to be rescued. Time is running out for them. We learn important lessons about life and eternity from the crisis in Chile. Men are trapped under darkness. Men are living in darkness. Men are dying in darkness. Time is running out for sinners. Christ is the Light of the World, and he came into the world to dispel darkness. May we all walk in the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and not in darkness. Let us pray.